



# Valley Mills Independent School District

Board Operating Procedures



# VALLEY MILLS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Board Operating Procedures

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In effective school systems, the Superintendent and the Board function as a “Team of Eight.” A structured approach (to developing a District vision and setting goals) is enhanced by first developing a system of standard operating procedures. The School Board is the corporate policy making body the District, the Superintendent and staff provide the leadership to implement Board policies.

The Valley Mills ISD Board of Trustees adopts these guidelines as Operating Procedures to effectively communicate with staff and patrons of the District.

American public education is characterized by its unique emphasis on local lay control of the governance of school districts. Board trustees, as locally elected public officials, are stewards of the educational welfare of all students in the district. Valley Mills ISD trustees adhere to the Ethics for School Board Members adopted by the Texas Association of School Boards. Ethics for School Board Members are included as Exhibit "B".



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#### I. **Developing the Board Meeting Agenda** (BE LEGAL, LOCAL)

##### a. Who can place items on the agenda

- 1) The tentative schedule is created by the superintendent and presented to the board president one week before the regular board meeting.
- 2) Board members must submit items for inclusion on the agenda, in writing or verbally to the Superintendent or Board President, by noon of the seventh day before regular meetings and noon of the sixth day before special meetings.
- 3) In accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Law, no board member can place an item on the agenda less than 72 hours in advance of a meeting, except in an emergency as per Texas Code.
- 4) The Board President shall ensure that all timely submitted trustee requested agenda items are either on that agenda or scheduled for deliberation at an appropriate time in the near future.

##### b. Items that cannot be discussed in public and must be discussed in closed session

- 1) All personnel issues must be conducted in a closed session unless specifically required by Texas Open Meetings Law.
- 2) Anything that violates right to privacy, Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Open Records Act, cannot be placed on the agenda.
- 3) All exceptions covered in the Texas Open Meetings Act.

##### c. Use of consent agenda (BE LOCAL)

- 1) At the discretion of the board, the following items may be acted upon as a consent agenda or they may be acted upon individually.
  - Routine items
  - Annual renewals of region XII and TEA items
  - Tax refunds over \$500
  - Gifts, donations and bequests
  - Financial information
  - Routine bid consideration

##### d. Agenda items for public input will be scheduled at a separate time from the regular board meeting under a public forum or public hearing agenda posting.



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#### II. Board member conduct during board meetings (BE LOCAL)

##### a. Citizens addressing the board (BED LOCAL)

- 1) Citizens may address the board on any item during the public comment section of the agenda by completing a request form prior to the meeting.
- 2) Guidelines for addressing the board will be adhered to, and the president will emphasize the guidelines to the public.
  - Comments limited to five minutes.
  - The board will accept written as well as oral information.
  - Groups of more than five people wishing to address the same issue will appoint one person to represent the group's view to the board.
  - The board will not entertain comments on individual personnel in public session.
  - The board will not entertain comments on individual students in public session.
  - Citizens should use appropriate campus and administrative channels before bringing concerns to the attention of the board.
  - The board will not allow inappropriate language or derogatory comments.

##### b. Board response to citizens addressing the board (BE LEGAL; BED LOCAL)

- 1) Board members can hear comments.
- 2) Items not on the agenda do not permit Board members to respond or discuss except to make specific factual statements or recitation of existing policy.
- 3) The board will not deliberate, discuss or make a decision on any subject that is not on the meeting agenda.
- 4) The Board President may direct the administration to investigate item(s) and report back to the Board.

##### c. Board shall use *Robert's Rule of Order, Newly Revised* for a guideline (BE LOCAL)

- 1) All discussion shall be directed solely to the business currently under deliberation.



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- 2) The board president has the responsibility to keep the discussion to the motion at hand and shall halt discussion that does not apply to the business before the board.
- 3) The board president has the right to recognize a board member prior to giving their comments.

#### **III. Voting (BE LOCAL; BBFA LEGAL, LOCAL; BDAA LOCAL)**

- a. The board president will vote on all action items.
- b. In case of a tie vote, the item is tabled. The board president may bring the item back to the board on a subsequent agenda.
- c. No member should vote on a motion in which he or she has a direct personal or fiscal interest not common to other board members.

#### **IV. Board member request for information or reports (BBE LOCAL)**

- a. Board members shall request information and/or reports through the board president to the superintendent.
- b. The superintendent will gather the information and/or reports and disseminate it in a timely manner to the board.
- c. Board members are encouraged to advise the superintendent of questions or concerns on agenda items before the board meeting.

#### **V. Citizens/Parent/Student request/complaint to an individual board member (BBE LOCAL; GF LOCAL; FNG LOCAL)**

- a. The board member should hear the full complaint for understanding of the persons involved, date, time, and place.
  - 1) Repeat the problem back to the citizen.
  - 2) State the chain of command to the citizen.
  - 3) Remind the citizen of due process and that the board member must remain impartial in case the situation goes before the board.
- b. Refer the citizen to the appropriate person in the chain of command.
- c. The administrator shall communicate with the citizen in a timely manner and follow up with the superintendent who will communicate with the board member.



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- VI. Employee request/complaint** to an individual board member (BBE LOCAL; DGBA LOCAL)
- The board member should hear the full complaint for understanding of the employee involved, date, time, and place.
    - Repeat the problem back to the employee.
    - State the chain of command to the employee.
    - Remind the employee of due process and that the board member must remain impartial in case the situation goes before the board.
  - Refer the employee to the appropriate person in the chain of command.
  - Board member must talk with the superintendent within 24 hours relaying the communication.
  - The employee will hear from the superintendent within a timely fashion unless the employee requests no contact from the superintendent.
- VII. Board member visit to campus** (GKC LEGAL, LOCAL)
- Board members are encouraged/expected to attend school activities and events on campuses to represent the board in support of activities.
  - Board members are not to go into teachers' classrooms or campuses for the purpose of evaluation or investigation.
  - Board members may visit any campus after checking in with the principal.
- VIII. Communication**
- Guidelines*
- The superintendent will communicate information in a timely manner to all board members via packets, telephone, fax, or email.
  - The board will keep the superintendent informed through telephone, email or fax.
  - The board will communicate with the community through public meetings, civic clubs, other public or private functions and regular board meetings.
  - Individual board members can speak to the public in an official capacity for the board on agenda items that have been discussed and voted on by the board. The communication should be in support of the board's decision.



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- e. Board members must also be cognizant of the fact that certain information they receive in their capacity as board members is confidential by law and may not be disclosed to third parties.
- f. Board members must not disclose information that is subject to the attorney-client privilege, information that has been received from the board attorney or other attorneys representing the district.

#### **IX. Communication with legal counsel (BDD LEGAL, LOCAL)**

- a. Individual Board members shall channel legal inquiries through the Superintendent or Board designee, as appropriate, when advice or information from the District's legal counsel is sought.
- b. Staff requests for legal advice from the District's legal counsel shall be submitted through the Superintendent or designee.
- c. A report of legal advice received shall be presented to the Board when deemed appropriate by the administration or upon request of the Board.

#### **X. Board members' standard of behavior (BBF LOCAL)**

- a. Board members will be knowledgeable of the Board of Trustees' Code of Ethics and the code's implication for their day-to-day action.
- b. The board president will present a copy of the "Code of Ethics" to each board member annually.

#### **XI. Evaluation of the superintendent (BJA LEGAL, LOCAL; BJCD LEGAL, LOCAL)**

- a. The evaluation of the superintendent is an indication of the success the board is having in meeting established goals.
- b. The instrument used to evaluate the Superintendent shall be based on the Superintendent's job description (*BJA Local*) and performance goals and shall be adopted by the Board.
- c. The Board shall prepare a written evaluation of the Superintendent at annual or more frequent intervals.
- d. The Board shall furnish the Superintendent with a copy of the completed evaluation and shall discuss its conclusions with the Superintendent in a closed meeting.





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- e. In conducting the Superintendent's written evaluation, the Board shall strive to accomplish the five (5) objectives outlined in local policy BJCD.
- f. The Board may at any time conduct and communicate oral evaluations to augment its written evaluations.
- g. Evaluation of the superintendent is conducted in closed session.

#### **XII. Criteria and process for selecting board officers (BDAA LEGAL, LOCAL)**

- a. Any person serving on the board may be considered for the office of president or vice president provided they have served as a board member for two years.
- b. Any person serving on the board may be considered for the office of secretary provided they have served on the board for one year.
- c. Nomination and voting will occur in open session at a regular board meeting.
- d. Board officers shall serve for a term of one year or until a successor is elected.
- e. Election of officers will be held in May.

#### **XIII. Role and authority of board members or board officers (BBD LEGAL, LOCAL; BDAB LEGAL, LOCAL; BDAC LOCAL AND BDAD LOCAL)**

- a. No board member or officer has authority outside the board meeting.
- b. No board member or officer can direct employees in regard to performance of their duties.
- c. Individual board members may serve on various school and community committees.
- d. Board president
  - 1) Shall preside at all board meetings.
  - 2) Shall appoint committees.
    - Committees shall contain no more than three board members.
    - Committees may transact business only within the specific authority granted by the board. To be binding, all such business must be reported to the board at a regular scheduled board meeting.
  - 3) Shall call special meetings.
  - 4) Shall sign all legal documents required by law.
- b. Vice president
  - 1) Shall act in capacity of the president in absence of the president.



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- c. Secretary
  - 1) Shall act in capacity of president in the absence of the president and the vice president.
  - 2) Shall sign or countersign documents as directed by action of the board.

#### **XIV. Role of board in closed session (BE LOCAL)**

- a. All personnel issues must be conducted in a closed session, unless specifically required by Texas Open Meetings Laws.
- b. By law, closed session discussions may not be disclosed or discussed outside the board's closed session.
- c. Board must vote in open session.

#### **XV. Media inquiries to the board**

- a. The board president and/or superintendent shall be the official spokesperson for the board to the media.
- b. Board members should direct all media calls to the board president and/or superintendent.

#### **XVI. Phone calls or letters to the board**

- a. The Valley Mills ISD board of trustees encourages input; however anonymous communication will not receive board action or response.
- b. Board members should refer phone calls with concerns or complaints to the appropriate administrator pursuant to board policy.

#### **XVII. Board Members as parents**

##### *Guidelines*

While Board members have no authority over staff members, it is often difficult for staff members to view the Board member as a parent rather than as a Board member.

- a. Board Members are encouraged to:
  - 1) Make it clear that they are acting as parents;
  - 2) Board members should not request nor accept extraordinary consideration for their children.



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#### **XVIII. Required board member training (BBD LEGAL, LOCAL, EXHIBIT)**

- a. Board members are required to complete training as specified in policy. This will include the following:
  - Required training.
  - New member orientation.
  - Legislative updates.
  - Team building.
  - Continuing education.
  - First year board member training.
  - Annual compliance announcement.

#### **XIX. Reimbursable expense**

- a. Board members shall be reimbursed for reasonable expenses for:
  - 1) Carrying out business of the board.
  - 2) Attending meetings and conventions as official representatives of the board.
  - 3) Reimbursable expenses include mileage, commercial transportation, parking, lodging, meals, and other incidental expenses.
  - 4) Rates for reimbursement will comply with the ISD requirements for employee reimbursements.
  - 5) Spouse's travel and meals will not be a reimbursable expense.

#### **XX. Campaigning for election or reelection (BBB LEGAL, LOCAL)**

##### *Guidelines*

- a. Board incumbents running for re-election shall not request or accept support from District employees during work time.
- b. Board member shall not utilize District equipment or materials for campaign.

#### **XXI. Review of board operating procedures**

- a. Standard board operating procedure will be reviewed and updated in July of each year.
- b. The board operating procedures may be modified at any time by a 2/3 vote of the board.
- c. Interpretation of board operating procedures will be at the sole discretion of the board.



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- d. Each new Board member will be given a copy of the Board Code of Ethics and Operating Procedures prior to or at the new Board member's first meeting.

#### **XXII. Violation of board operating procedures**

- a. Individual board members are encouraged to express their concerns about another member's performance directly with that member.
- b. If addressing the issue directly with the member does not resolve the concern, then discussion with the board president is appropriate.
  - 1) The board president shall discuss the concerns with the individual in question. If the issue constitutes enough members involved to represent a quorum the meeting must be posted and conducted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
  - 2) The president shall remind the board member whose behavior is in question about the Code of Ethics and how the behavior does not comply. The discussion will include more appropriate alternatives.
  - 3) If the board member in question does not believe his or her behavior is in conflict with the board's Code of Ethics, an agenda item specifying evaluation of individual board member's performance may be listed on the agenda of the next regular board meeting.
  - 4) The matter will be discussed by the full board in closed session in an attempt to clearly identify behavior that may be inappropriate and discuss possible solutions that would have a more positive impact on the cohesion of the board and its effectiveness.
- c. If the concern involves the board president, a member may discuss his or her concerns with the vice president.
- d. Board members will not take concerns about fellow board members to the superintendent.
- e. Board members will not speak about concerns regarding individual members with individuals outside of the board.
- f. Members should not speak negatively about another board member, superintendent, or staff in the community.



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#### **XXIII. Board self- evaluation**

- a. The Superintendent and Board function as a Team of Eight.
- b. Evaluation of the board and Superintendent is an indication of the success the Governance Team is having in meeting established goals.
- c. The evaluation will take place in February.

#### **XXIV. Violations and Sanctions**

- a. Removal From office (*Policy BBC*)
- b. Conflict of Interest Disclosures, Violations (*Policy BBFA Legal*)
- c. Ethics, Prohibited Practices, Violations (*Policy BBFB*)
- d. Board Meetings, Closed Meetings, Prohibitions (*Policy BEC Legal*)



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#### **Exhibit A: Commonly Used Board Policies**

BBD (LEGAL, LOCAL, EXHIBIT)

BBE (LEGAL, LOCAL)

BBF (LOCAL)

BBFA (LEGAL, LOCAL)

BDAA (LEGAL, LOCAL)

BDAB (LEGAL, LOCAL)

BDAC (LOCAL)

BDAD (LOCAL)

BE (LEGAL, LOCAL)

BED (LEGAL, LOCAL)

BJA (LEGAL, LOCAL)

BJCD (LEGAL, LOCAL)

CAA (LOCAL)

DGBA (LEGAL, LOCAL)

FOD (LEGAL)

FNG (LEGAL, LOCAL)

GF (LEGAL, LOCAL)



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#### **Exhibit B: Code of Ethics for School Board Members of Valley Mills ISD**

##### **Equity in Attitude**

- I will be fair, just, and impartial in all my decisions and actions.
- I will accord others the respect I wish for myself.
- I will encourage expressions of different opinions and listen with an open mind to others' ideas.

##### **Trustworthiness in Stewardship**

- I will be accountable to the public by representing district policies, programs, priorities and progress accurately.
- I will be responsive to the community by seeking its involvement in district affairs and by communicating its priorities and concerns.
- I will work to ensure prudent and accountable use of district resources.
- I will make no personal promise or take private action that may compromise my performance of my responsibilities.

##### **Honor in Conduct**

- I will tell the truth.
- I will share my views while working for consensus.
- I will respect the majority decision as the decision of the board.
- I will base my decision on fact rather than assumption, opinion, or public favor.

##### **Integrity of Character**

- I will refuse to surrender judgment to any individual or group at the expense of the district as a whole.
- I will consistently uphold all applicable laws, rules, policies and governance procedures.
- I will keep confidential information that is privileged by law or that will needlessly harm the district if disclosed.

##### **Commitment to Service**

- I will focus my attention on fulfilling the board's responsibilities of goal setting, policymaking, and evaluation.
- I will diligently prepare for and attend board meetings.
- I will avoid personal involvement in activities the board has delegated to the superintendent.
- I will seek continuing education that will enhance my ability to fulfill my duties effectively.

##### **Student Centered Focus**

- I will be continuously guided by what is best for all students of the district.



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### Exhibit C: Continuing Education Requirements

Continuing Education Required of Local School Board Members	Tier	First Year Board Member	Experienced Board Member	Provider
Local District Orientation	1	Required within 60 days of election or appointment (no specified length of time)	Not required	Local district
Orientation to the Texas Education Code	1	3 hours	Not required	Education Service Center
Update to the Texas Education Code	1	Not required	<i>After legislative session: length determined by issues addressed in legislation</i>	Any registered provider
Team-building Session/Assessment of Continuing Education Needs of the Board-Superintendent Team	2	At least 3 hours	At least 3 hours each year	Any registered provider
Additional Continuing Education, based on assessed needs and the Framework for Governance Leadership	3	At least 10 hours	At least 5 hours each year	Any registered provider
<b>Continuing Education Required of All Elected Public Officials—Effective 1/1/2006</b>		<b>First Year Board Member</b>	<b>Experienced Board Member</b>	<b>Provider</b>
Open Meetings Training		1 hour Required within 90 days of election or appointment		Attorney General's Office or other approved provider
Public Information Act Training (Boards may delegate this training to the district's public information coordinator)		Check local district policy for any board requirement (BBD Local)		Attorney General's Office or other approved provider

If you have questions about continuing education requirements for school board members, please call 800-580-8272, extension 2219 or visit [LTS.tasb.org](http://LTS.tasb.org). For information about Leadership Team Services (LTS) and its programs and services, go to [LTS.tasb.org](http://LTS.tasb.org), or call 800-580-8272, extension 6161.

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Leadership Team Services